

Congressman Bright Supports Bill to Improve Services for Veterans

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Bright voted for the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act, a bill designed to improve services for veterans and their caregivers. The House has previously passed the Caregiver Assistance and Resource Enhancement (CARE) Act (H.R. 3155) and the Women Veterans Health Care Improvement Act by unanimous margins. S. 1963, which has already passed the Senate, includes those bills. The legislation passed yesterday by a unanimous 419-0 vote in the House.

“I am very pleased that this Congress is continuing its work on behalf of our veterans,” Bright said. “The Caregiver and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act is one additional step to improve veterans care and the services that the VA offers. Last year, a historic increase in funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs was signed into law. And for the first time, we will be making advance appropriations for the VA, ensuring that the VA will not be subject to budgetary uncertainty. S. 1963 will provide veterans’ caregivers with additional resources, and bolster services for female, rural, catastrophically disabled, and homeless veterans.

“Veterans have sacrificed so much to give us the freedoms we enjoy, and we have a responsibility to see that they are always supported when they come home,” Bright continued. “Passing this legislation is the least we can do to live up to the obligations we have to our veterans.”

The Caregiver Assistance portion of the bill will provide eligible caregivers who live with a veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan the following:

- Training and education
- Counseling and mental health services
- Respite care of no less than 30 days annually, including 24 hour in-home respite care
- Lodging and subsistence

payments when accompanying the veteran on medical care visits
Health care through the
Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs
program
Monthly financial
stipend as determined appropriate by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs

For caregivers of veterans from any war (non-family members
do not have a residency requirement), the bill provides:

Training and education
Counseling and mental
health services
Respite care including
24 hours in-home respite care
Information on the
support services available to caregivers through other public, private,
and non-profit agencies

For female veterans, the bill:

- .
Conducts a study of barriers to women veterans
seeking health care
- .
Educates and trains mental health professionals
caring for veterans with sexual trauma
- .
Implements a reintegration and readjustment
pilot program
- .
Establishes a child care pilot program for women
receiving regular and intensive mental health care and intensive health care
services, or who are in need of such services but do not seek care due to the
lack of child care services
- .
Provides up to seven days of post-delivery
health care to a new born child of a female veteran

The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act
also improves health care for veterans living in rural areas by expanding
transportation for veterans to local VA hospitals and clinics through VA grants
to local Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs). Additionally, the bill
prohibits the VA from collecting copayments from veterans who are
catastrophically disabled. Finally, S. 1963 expands the organizations
offering transitional housing and other support for homeless veterans that can
receive grants or per diems from the VA, which is particularly important to
veterans in rural areas.

The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act has
received widespread support from VSOs. The Veterans of Foreign Wars said

“the bill will make a profound difference to veterans,” while AMVETS notes the bill “…goes a long way to ensure severely disabled veteran and their family will have the resources needed to provide quality care inside their own homes… ensure that our rural and remote veterans will have access to care through a variety of initiatives.”